

letters to the editor

sam alston

Dear Sir,

The following was found amongst the belongings of John Deetsworth of Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Deetsworth died of a heart attack in 1922, and his belongings have been in storage at the home of his son, Xavier Deetsworth, until recently when Xavier Deetsworth donated all of his father's documents from *The Chicago Ledger* to the Chicago Historical Society.

The documents were not processed until a few months ago, when the CHS was able to spend time examining Mr. Deetsworth's items. Found in a box labeled "Possible Stories," the following documents are of unknown origin. There was a picture in the folder with the letters; however water damage has made the object of interest within the photograph indiscernible.

The letters have been typed in their entirety; the postmarks upon the envelopes added to the text. No other changes have been made.

Thank you,

Evan Jones,
President of the Chicago Historical Society
November 22, 2003

To: Mr. John Deetsworth
The Chicago Ledger
2417 Jackson Ave,
Chicago, Illinois

From: Charles Poltan
4663 Gross Ave,
Chicago, Illinois

Received: March 29th, 1906

Dear Sir,

I find myself writing your rather renowned (and some might say renounced) publication due to some extraordinary events that have occurred in the recent past. I must say, due to the decidedly uncommon and often unfounded nature of the articles produced by your colleagues, you were not my first choice. Neither were you the second, third, etc. In fact, if any of the more civilized and esteemed newspapers would have accepted my proposed documents and narration of events I do not believe I would be contacting you at this time.

Perhaps before I completely alienate you to my attempt, I should elaborate on the events which have unfolded around my person. I am unsure as to how I should introduce my experience and so I shall just, as they say, come out with it. I believe I have been in the presence of the Devil or at the very least a demon of some stature within the unholy hierarchy of the underworld.

Now I am a man not often bamboozled by tricks of light or the illusions hosted by the charlatans' singing their songs of deception in the streets. So when I say that I saw a creature that cannot possibly exist in our current system of kingdom to species definitions, you can rest assured that what I saw was not a trick, but a being of flesh and bone.

I pray you do not just crumple this paper of my notification, for it is of vital import that some person of intelligence be notified. That the general public be notified. I have not included a description of the beast (there is no other term in my extensive vernacular more appropriate or properly illustrative than beast,) for it is not necessary. I have managed to capture a photograph of the damned.

I have, however, already spent a goodly amount of time just explaining myself, and seeing as it is likely that my efforts in contacting you are as in vain as my previous attempts, I will simply attach one of the images captured, for I have several. I pray that you soften your heart and deem my story worthy of further investigation.

To: Mr. John Deetsworth
The Chicago Ledger
2417 Jackson Ave,
Chicago, Illinois

From: Charles Poltan
4663 Gross Ave
Chicago, Illinois

Received: July 21, 1906

Dear Sir,

I had assumed you would respond quite rapidly, as I had attached that image, proof of the demonic existence. However it has been several months now, and I am concerned by your lack of reaction. I can only therefore assume that you have no belief that what I tell you is true. I do not believe that it matters.

I have, upon occasion, picked up and read your publication. It is plain to the most ignorant individual who might casually browse your documents, that all within is utter rubbish and nonsense. Your piece "Man Gives Birth" I found not only exceptionally offensive, but so utterly incomprehensible as to give pain to my mind. Therefore, I have issue with your indecisiveness regarding my admission of meeting a being of supreme maliciousness.

Another point of evidence might be the story headlined by: "Noah's Ark found, Unicorns Still Onboard." There isn't a single piece of fact within that article. So why then is it that you have not responded to my letter? For if "Man Can Swallow Whole Foot" can be printed, why cannot the information I have gained from my encounter, even if you believe it false? Surely you cannot believe that the mythical horned beast of yore was left within the ark. That it was forgotten amongst the other animals within that great ship? I cannot believe that of any educated person.

I am local to your employment, I have evidence from this locale and furthermore I know that you have printed far less likely encounters within your pages. Therefore I do not see any reason why my information cannot be repeated to the general public.

Therefore I entreat you, please reply soon. If you do not, I might have need to contact a competitor, *The New England Post* perhaps? I am almost certain that they would entertain the thought of using the additional photographs mentioned in my previous communication.

To: Mr. John Deetsworth
The Chicago Ledger
2417 Jackson Ave,
Chicago, Illinois

From: Charles Poltan
4663 Gross Ave
Chicago, Illinois

Received: August 2, 1906

Dear Sir,

Perhaps you find the image so inexplicable that you cannot digest my assertion that the photograph is indeed genuine. Perhaps it is not apparent to you what significance this image has to the world. I can only assume that it is a reason such as these that have prevented you from replying to my earlier correspondence. Certainly your time has not been occupied by researching facts or realistic scenarios.

For again I have read the latest edition of your publication and indeed I find it held naught but lies and libel. Indeed there were so many situations impossible to consider that perhaps my information is better suited to another publication, one perhaps of dignity and dedicated to the pursuit of the truth. Do any beings of intelligence believe the distressing filth "exposed" as you yourself stated in your editorial on the pastimes of Congressman Smith's daughter?

However, every other submission of mine has been answered with a recommendation for psychological treatment, including *The New England Post* which declared my photograph a "masterful illusion using some unknown parlor trick and creative uses of quicksilver." You, I must consider, have simply ignored my revelation, and therefore I assume that you have not dismissed my revelation outright. I propose

then that you respond to the above address with utmost urgency, as I have several other images I would share. Indeed, and furthermore a full report of the dialogue between myself and that inconceivable being.

To: Mr. John Deetsworth
The Chicago Ledger
2417 Jackson Ave,
Chicago, Illinois

From: Charles Poltan
4663 Gross Ave
Chicago, Illinois

Received: November 7, 1906

Dear Sir,

I apologize for the length of time it has taken me to take further action, but I have been quite distressed as of late. I cannot seem to keep myself in order, as I had been. I wrote all down concerning my encounter. I had sealed the documents within an envelope, and then laid down for an attempt at rest. Sleep comes so very rarely for me now, with haunting illusions of the malevolent grandeur I witnessed nigh on ten months ago.

I had not been released into a deep slumber for a long period, when I was awakened by a sound. It sounded as though a great conversation was being held in whisper, and within the confines of my flat. I, fully awake at this moment, went out from my bedroom to discover no person within my home nor object misplaced. It was not until the morning that I discovered the documentation had vanished.

It is not just items related to my unholy visitor, but also everyday occurrences where I will forget the name of the person I am speaking with, or I will misplace my bank ledger. There have been many items misplaced within my home, and I am quite certain that I did not remove them to another location. All these things have kept me from contacting you again.

I do now plead with you, please respond. I may be of unstable mind. If so then I rejoice, for it would mean the information passed to me from my tormentor was false, and merely the creation of a failing psyche. I will try to re-document the experience, and this time protect the documents by some manner to insure their arrival at your door.

To: Mr. John Deetsworth
The Chicago Ledger
2417 Jackson Ave,
Chicago, Illinois

From: Mr. Donald Cole
4664 Gross Ave
Chicago, Illinois

Received December 28th, 1906

Mr. Charles Poltan of 11007 Green St. E has been my friend and neighbor for many a year. I am not as well educated as him, so I cannot speak quite so intelligently, but I shall try.

Charles spoke to me of his encounter, and has shown me the photographs. I believe him. I have no reason not to, though his claim is hard to digest. But he's been my neighbor twenty years, and I've never known him to tell a lie. I say all of this to let you know what kind of man he was. I don't know how much you've been informed of, but I know he's kept a bit from me. I just ask that you believe him, or at least believe what he's shared with you in the past.

He hasn't been the same since his experience. I think I would be different as well if I saw Lucifer himself. I may not know much, but I know it changed him in every way. He was a healthy man, fit and sure footed. After his ordeal, he began to look shrunken, not unlike a mummy. He couldn't think with the same ease he'd enjoyed before. He would stop mid-sentence, listening all intently like someone was whispering.

I think the only way to really describe it is to say he lost his spirit. Like a horse with a lame leg, he just didn't want to go on. He just withered away, until he was nothing. I don't think that people can do that, just dry up and crumble away unless

something really awful happens to them. More than anything, I think seeing him disappear like that convinced me of what he said.

Well, as to the reason I'm writing you. Charles came over late at night a week ago, asking me to hold this letter for him. He said if he didn't come back in a week then to mail them off, and hope for the best. I have attached his letter.

May God protect us all.

Dear Sir,

It is December 19th, 1906, and to be frank sir, I am afraid. I date this writing for I am unsure as to when you might receive it. Things have begun happening, inexplicable events that have proven to my mind's certainty that the beast I encountered has recruited other dark forces into alliance in the effort to destroy my body, mind, and soul.

I thought perhaps I was losing my grip upon sanity, my mind simply broken from the horror witnessed more than one year past. As I do not suspect I will be entirely whole of body and spirit by the celebration of the New Year, I shall entrust with you the terrifying facts unleashed upon me by the dark fiend met in the bewitching hours of February 25th, 1905.

I, being a photographer of some skill by trade, had agreed to provide my services to the wedding of an enchanting young couple, their vows to be spoken at the Lutheran chapel on the corner of 75th and Wilson. I had finished with my duties, and having a desire to clear my mind I set my heart upon a stroll through the chill winds, blowing through the night filled streets. I carried my equipment for fear of thievery, and its load waned my strength as I walked, the moon showering the city with its radiance. I was just beginning to think of turning about and returning when a curious red glow caught my attention.

The red light poured around the corner of a liquor-store, long since closed at this late hour. I approached cautiously, my heart beating swiftly. Even now as I recall the events past, I feel my body reacting, preparing for flight from the danger there discovered.

Crouching behind the corner, I felt dread as I had never before known. Yet, being a man not feeble in courage, I pressed my face against the cold brick of the building, and fixed my eyes upon the source of the innate glow.

As I have stated before, and have evidenced further by the image previously attached, it was a beast of some sort. For look upon the picture now, does any man carry horns such as those? Any man with such a solid chest of steel not unlike that of a blacksmith have majestic wings such as the image depicts? Has any man walked upon hooved feet? Nay, only the teachings of God our Father have described such beings, and have given us knowledge of the evil of their kind.

Thus with much trepidation did I attempt to back away from the beast, but my stealth was for naught, as he did glimpse my passing by some extraordinary sight, and did call out my name bidding me to come forward.

I did as he bade, not for respect of the demonic form, nor from his apparent omniscience from the knowledge of my name, but for fear of the consequences should I attempt escape and fail. He looked through those eyes, (look at them now in the photograph and see how evil they appear), red as blood and his vision locked upon my personage. It was such that I could not move any muscle, nor speak even if asked to.

He began speaking to me, his voice deep and heavy, shaking the very foundations of my soul. From the bowels of the beast came forth what I hope are lies; lies as to his dark preparations for the end of humanity; lies as to the evil date upon which the destruction of the world would occur, 100 years hence.

Indeed he continued on telling me many things which horrified my very being, driving my mind to transcribe his voice, while my inner soul attempted to deny the truth of it. He told me of the assassinations of further presidents, of great financial loss and ruin, and of wars. Two wars such as the world had never seen, to be followed at the date a century hence by a war in which none survived.

I cannot say why he told me these things, save to torment me with knowledge none other would believe. I scarcely believe it myself. He then gave me a warning never to speak of the incident again and, stretching forth his immense wings in preparation

of departure, his hold upon my person was lifted. My mind began processing, and not wanting to allow such an impossible encounter go undocumented, I prepared the flash and pressed the switch. He seemed to be waiting for me, allowing me time to capture many images, reloading the camera several times before he leapt into the air. He was gone almost instantaneously. I believe he must have wanted me to capture the images, if only to eclipse the notion that I had gone mad. I only need look at the proof to prove I had not.

I immediately, upon arriving at my home, began developing the pictures. I began sending out notices of my experience, much like the one you received a while ago. I sent these notices to such notables as the President, General Carver, and several professional publications. I received responses indicting me of lunacy and affront, and I was asked never to correspond with any of them again. But though the demon warned me, I had not felt any danger from my ignore notifications. Not until contacting you did I feel his dark grip closing about me, the blackness coming forth.

Now I feel at times afraid, watched by an unknown voyeur and intimidated by his apparent invisibility. I have come across items in my home, rearranged from where I placed them. There have been messages left upon my mirror, cold breath felt upon my neck. I fear for my life.

There is more I must tell, for the demon told me more than explained above, for brevities sake. He has told me how to prevent many of the tragedies unleashed. But I can hardly scribe the words upon the paper as my hand shakes so. I need a moment to clear my mind, a walk perhaps. Fresh air has always helped me conduct my thoughts.

I am leaving this document with my neighbor, a hard working laborer by the name of Donald Cole, with instructions to mail this to you in a week should I fail to return and complete it. I pray you do not find my note ended here.